

KHSA Receives Oral Health Grant

The Kansas Head Start Association has received a grant from the United Methodist Health Ministry Fund (UMHMF) in Hutchinson for an Early Head Start Oral Health Initiative—the first of this type in the country. UMHMF announced the availability of oral health “safety net grants” earlier this year. KHSA convened a group of health specialists to discuss the most pressing needs within our Head Start programs that could be addressed through this grant opportunity. The consensus was that we should focus on our youngest children and try to prevent cavities before they get started—thus the focus on Early Head Start. (EHS).

All 16 EHS programs have been invited to participate in the initiative, which can impact up to 1000 children.

Our goal is for 95 percent of the children to reach the age of three without dental caries (cavities).

The initiative includes staff and parent education approaches which have been very successful in other states; regular screenings, including fluoride varnish application; recruitment of additional dentists and dental hygienists; and an evaluation process to track and compare results.

Dr. Michael Kanellis, a pediatric dentist from Iowa who is nationally known as a champion for better oral health care for young children, is working with us. Dr. Kanellis and Mary Kelly, a dental hygienist, will be joining our state oral health consultant, Dawn McGlasson, and project coordinator Marcia Manter for a three-day training on November 5, 6 and 7 in Wichita.

The initiative will run for two years and has been funded for a total of \$52,000.